



**National Association for the Education of Young Children**  
1313 L Street NW Suite 500  
Washington DC 20005  
800-424-2460 x.8839  
202-232-8777 x.8839  
[www.naeyc.org](http://www.naeyc.org)

The **NAEYC Quality Rating and Improvement Systems (QRIS) Toolkit** was developed to provide assistance in understanding and advocating for a systems-building approach to improving the quality of early childhood programs at the state and local levels. Each section of the Toolkit contains background information on a specific topic. The topics that the Toolkit covers include: Overview of Quality Rating and Improvement Systems, Planning a Quality Rating and Improvement System, and Quality Rating and Improvement Systems Nuts and Bolts (Financing, Tiers, Program and Provider Supports, and NAEYC Early Childhood Program Accreditation). Following these topics, the Toolkit also includes supplemental materials and additional resources.

NAEYC Policy and Public Affairs staff can provide technical assistance on a variety of topics, and can tailor technical assistance to any request. For more information, call Davida McDonald at 1-800-424-2460 x.8839 or email at [dmcdonald@naeyc.org](mailto:dmcdonald@naeyc.org).

## Overview – What are Quality Rating and Improvement Systems?

### Purpose and Description

NAEYC sees Quality Rating and Improvement Systems (QRIS) as serving multiple purposes:

- ▣ Helping to benchmark quality for consumers and broaden awareness of the components of quality;
- ▣ Providing additional incentives and resources to programs;
- ▣ Creating a stronger infrastructure to support and sustain the quality of programs, regardless of setting.

QRIS are used to evaluate, improve and communicate the level of quality in early childhood programs. QRIS take a systems approach and uniformly address multiple aspects of early care and education. QRIS can include a broad range of early care and education programs (such as center-based child care, family child care, school-age, prekindergarten, and/or Head Start) and funding streams. QRIS are part of the quality improvement spectrum, and share five common elements:

- ▣ Standards
- ▣ Accountability
- ▣ Program and Provider Outreach and Support
- ▣ Financial Incentives Linked to Compliance with Standards
- ▣ Consumer Education

### History

The first statewide QRIS was created in 1998 in Oklahoma. Since then, there has been growing momentum at the state and local levels to use QRIS as a systematic approach for benchmarking quality, as well as identifying and rewarding early childhood programs that provide high quality services. There are now **17 statewide quality rating and improvement systems** in Colorado, District of Columbia, Indiana, Iowa, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maine, Maryland, Montana, New Hampshire, New Mexico, North Carolina, Ohio, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, and Vermont. Fifteen of the seventeen statewide QRIS allow school-age programs to participate and all but one allow family child care homes to participate in their QRIS. Fourteen of the seventeen statewide QRIS allow state-funded prekindergarten programs to participate, as well. All but one of the statewide QRIS allow Head Start programs to participate.

There are an additional 28 states in some phase of QRIS development. Some localities and counties across the country also have QRIS. For example, a pilot in Tucson, Arizona, which ended in 2006, was used to guide the development of a planned statewide QRIS. The term “quality rating and improvement system” has helped to move the focus away from the rating of programs and place an emphasis on continuous quality improvement.

### **Quality Rating and Improvement Systems vs. Tiered Reimbursement Programs**

QRIS and tiered reimbursement programs are not mutually exclusive – in fact, 11 of the statewide QRIS link to their state’s tiered reimbursement program, as well. However, it is important to make clear the distinction between QRIS and tiered reimbursement.

*Quality Rating and Improvement Systems* are open to providers both within and outside of a state’s child care subsidy system. They are more than merely rating early childhood programs and include: standards, accountability, outreach to consumers, outreach and supports to programs and providers, and financial incentives for complying with standards. For example, in Kentucky, programs that participate in the state’s QRIS are eligible for free technical assistance and grants to support accreditation. These programs are also eligible for quality incentive awards and providers can access funds to assist them in pursuing educational opportunities.

*Tiered reimbursement programs* are specifically for programs that accept subsidies and provide a higher reimbursement rate for programs that meet certain standards. For example, in Massachusetts, programs receive a higher reimbursement rate depending on which activities they take part in, including: developing a literacy curriculum plan for school readiness, offering a salary incentive program for professional development, doing an annual program assessment using an environmental ratings scale, and partnering with a university to conduct a longitudinal study to evaluate the school readiness curriculum. Right now, 29 states have some type of tiered reimbursement program for their child care subsidy systems.

### **NAEYC Accreditation and Quality Rating and Improvement Systems**

NAEYC believes that QRIS should provide a number of tiers or levels in order to provide a continuum that sets clear benchmarks of quality that build upon each other, leading to the top tier that includes program accreditation by a national early childhood program accreditation system, including NAEYC Accreditation for center-based and school-based programs, and other recognized national accreditation systems for family child care and school-age care. Currently, 15 statewide QRIS link to NAEYC Accreditation.

### ***From the NAEYC Public Policy Program, as adopted by the NAEYC Governing Board November 6, 2007***

Quality rating and improvement systems (which include rated licensing and voluntary and mandatory rating and improvement systems of programs based on indicators of program quality) should be used for (1) greater consumer awareness of quality programs, (2) increasing resources to help programs improve and sustain higher quality, (3) and creating system-wide improvements in the quality of all programs, including all settings and auspices and ages of children served.

Quality rating and improvement systems should provide at least three tiers or levels in order to provide a continuum that sets clear benchmarks of quality that build upon each other – starting with state licensing requirements and leading to the top tier that includes program accreditation by a national early childhood program accreditation system, including NAEYC accreditation for center-based and school-based programs, and other recognized national accreditation systems for family child care and school-age care.

Multi-leveled quality rating and improvement systems must be supported by a systemwide strategy for:

- Improving professional development and higher education opportunities for program staff and directors linked to a career pathway in the field of early childhood education.
- Enhancing compensation that reflects additional education and retention in the field.
- Increasing reimbursement rates/payments to reflect the cost of quality programs and other mechanisms to ensure that high quality programs are affordable for all families.
- Expanding family involvement and understanding of quality early childhood education in ways that are inclusive and respectful of the diversity of families and children with special needs.
- Fairly evaluating programs for meeting evidence-based conditions for quality and
- Promoting programs' continuous improvement to encourage achievement of higher tiers.

Quality rating and improvement systems should be embedded in the regulatory system to enable greater systemic improvements.

Quality rating and improvement systems should build upon and should be used to raise child care licensing standards and should address

- Physical environment, including class size and ratios as well as health and safety.
- Staff qualifications and professional development.
- Interactions between teachers, children and families.
- Developmentally and culturally appropriate curriculum and classroom practices.
- Regular program evaluation and public reporting.
- Support to programs by having an adequate number of well-trained evaluators and access to technical assistance and mentoring to help programs reach the next level of the quality rating.
- Continuous program quality improvement.

## Planning a Quality Rating and Improvement System

There are several questions that someone may have about QRIS development. The first step is to define the goals of the QRIS and to inventory what pieces of a QRIS are already in place, as well as any obstacles that may be placed in the way of development.

Questions that you may need to answer during this process include:

- **What are your state's goals in developing a QRIS?** States and communities have stated various goals in developing their QRIS, examples of which are:
  - Strengthening the licensing and regulatory system
  - Improving the quality of early childhood programs
  - Increasing reimbursement rates in the subsidy system
  - Improving the training and compensation of the early care and education workforce
  - Increasing family involvement
  - Increasing consumer awareness of quality
  - Creating a consistent approach to program improvement across all care and education programs and funding streams
  - Focusing on continuous quality improvement
- **What parts of a QRIS are already in place?** For example:
  - Does your state have a tiered reimbursement program?
  - Does your state have a *T.E.A.C.H.* or *WAGE\$* program?
  - Does your state have an accreditation facilitation project?
  - Does your state provide technical assistance to providers and programs to improve their quality?
  - Does your state require articulation agreements between public and private colleges?
  - Does your state have a facilities fund to support quality improvements?
- **How are the parts of a QRIS already in place financed?**
- What gaps remain?

Also during the QRIS development phase, there are some nuts and bolts questions that the planning group must answer, such as:

- **Who should be involved in the planning process for a QRIS?**
- **Who are the main opponents and proponents of a QRIS?**
  - If the Governor is the main proponent of a QRIS, what is his/her relationship with your state legislature?
  - If the early childhood advocates in your state are the main proponents, who are their political allies?
- Will the QRIS be established through legislation or will it be part of state regulations?
- Will the system be voluntary or mandatory?
- Will the QRIS begin statewide or will it expand from pilots?
- What types of providers will be able to participate?

- How will developing a QRIS impact other state early childhood policies moving forward (i.e., subsidies/rates, pre-k, infant/toddler)?

Some of these questions can only be answered at the state or community level, with input from a broad group of decisionmakers. However, the materials in this QRIS Toolkit can help you answer these questions, and we will answer in detail below some of the questions that we hear most often concerning QRIS.

### **Who should be involved in the planning process for a QRIS?**

First, you must develop a broad-based planning group that includes stakeholders from a variety of areas. These stakeholders can include:

- Representatives from the local and/or state NAEYC affiliate
- Representatives from state agencies that oversee early care and education programs
- Representatives of the various types of programs (i.e., family child care, school-age, center-based, school-based, Head Start) that are intended to participate in the QRIS
- Representatives from the United Way, child advocacy organizations, and other groups working on early care and education in communities
- Parents and organizations that represent parents
- Representatives of tribes that are present in the state
- Representatives from the philanthropic community
- Powerful allies from the business and political communities
- Representatives from higher education and other organizations that prepare the early care and education workforce
- Legislative leaders (or their staff) from both political parties

### **Will the QRIS be established through legislation or will it be part of state regulations?**

Of the 17 states with a statewide QRIS, six states (Colorado, Iowa, Louisiana, Kentucky, North Carolina, and Tennessee) have established their QRIS legislatively. There are various factors that determine whether a QRIS should be moved through the legislative process or be placed in state regulations - these factors depend on the political, social and economic climate of a state. For example, thousands of bills may be filed during a legislative session and a QRIS bill may be lost in the shuffle - so establishing a QRIS as part of state regulations may seem like a sure fire win. However, once the QRIS is established, funding may have to be appropriated through a legislative budget process. If

the legislature does not support allocating funding for a QRIS, then there will be no money to support its implementation.

**Should a QRIS be mandatory or voluntary?**

One part of Tennessee's QRIS is mandatory - and programs that have at least a certain rating are automatically enrolled in the voluntary portion of the QRIS. North Carolina's QRIS is a rated license, and participation in the first level of the QRIS is mandatory for all licensed programs in the state. The first level of New Mexico's QRIS is a rated license - it is voluntary for programs who want to achieve higher tiers and is linked to the state's tiered reimbursement program. The QRIS in the 14 remaining states with statewide QRIS are voluntary - but only licensed programs are allowed to participate in all statewide QRIS.

There are many factors that can affect the decision to implement a voluntary, as opposed to a mandatory, QRIS. In your state, a mandatory QRIS may face strong opposition from programs and others in the early childhood field, especially if there is concern that there are not enough resources (i.e., financial, not enough staff to monitor compliance with standards) to support programs' participation. Also, decisionmakers may want to take a wait and see approach for the first few years of implementation to see how many programs actually participate in a voluntary QRIS before implementing a mandatory QRIS.

**Should a QRIS start as a pilot or statewide?**

There are various reasons why a QRIS may start as a pilot and expand statewide. One reason is resources - there may not enough funding available to support a statewide QRIS but there may be sufficient funding to support a distinct number of pilots throughout the state. Another reason is that the number of programs that will participate in the QRIS is questionable - and pilots may help to gauge how many programs would participate in a statewide QRIS before actually going statewide. Also, data from QRIS pilots can be used as a tool to help supporters push for statewide implementation of a QRIS.

## Quality Rating and Improvement Systems Nuts and Bolts – Financing

### How are QRIS commonly funded?

The largest source of funding for QRIS is federal (CCDBG and TANF) and state child care funds. However, QRIS can be funded by other sources of funding including corporations and foundations. Specifically, some communities have used United Way and foundation grants to supplement other sources of funding for a QRIS. In this way, QRIS are a method for pulling together various funding streams that currently support quality – making QRIS the foundation of an infrastructure that supports higher quality early childhood programs.

### What are the financing needs for a QRIS?

The financing needs for a QRIS are similar to the financing needs of an early care and education system, including supports: to develop quality standards, to meet and maintain quality standards, for monitoring and accountability, to provide financial assistance linked to complying with standards, and for provider and consumer engagement and outreach.

### What are the major costs involved in a QRIS?

The major costs involved in a QRIS are: designing the system, system administration and accountability, supports for providers and programs, and outreach to families and other consumers.

- ✓ **Designing the system** – These costs can include dedicated staff time for the QRIS development workgroup and additional costs incurred during the planning process. In Washington, the legislation that enabled the Early Learning Council to develop an early learning plan (which would include a voluntary QRIS) also enabled the governor to hire an executive director to coordinate the work of the Early Learning Council.
- ✓ **System administration and accountability** – These costs can include the costs of staff to evaluate and monitor programs, evaluation of the QRIS, and other administrative costs (such as a computerized system for tracking the programs participating in the QRIS). In Oklahoma, Licensing Specialists monitor program compliance with Reaching for the Stars quality criteria three times per year. In Kentucky, the Division of Regulated Child Care employs “STAR raters”, who monitor compliance with standards, administer environmental ratings scales, and recommend STAR rating levels for programs.
- ✓ **Supports for providers and programs** – These costs can include: professional development for providers, technical assistance for program quality improvement, financial incentives, and resources explaining the QRIS and how to participate. Kentucky’s *STARS for KIDS NOW* includes a variety of supports to programs and



providers which include: a one-time achievement award to programs, quarterly quality incentive awards to programs, and scholarships to providers who work a minimum of 20 hours per week in a preschool setting.

- ✓ **Outreach to families and other consumers** – Participating in a voluntary QRIS in a meaningful way is the key to the effectiveness for consumers and providers. Outreach costs include: creation and dissemination of materials, creation and upkeep of websites, orientation sessions for programs, orientation sessions for organizations that provide assistance to programs and consumers, and outreach staff. Each of the 17 statewide QRIS have a website, some of which are more detailed than others. For example, North Carolina has a website describing its Star Rated License, which includes a sample Star Rated License, detailed information on how the star rating is determined, and frequently asked consumer questions.

There are a variety of cost models that current statewide and pilot QRIS use. The Policy and Public Affairs Team at NAEYC would be happy to put you in touch with QRIS representatives to discuss the details of these cost models one-on-one.

### **What is the role of financial incentives in a QRIS?**

Financial incentives are commonly viewed as investments in early childhood program quality because they can help to fill the gap between the cost of providing higher-quality programs and the fees that are charged to families. Currently, all statewide QRIS provide financial incentives that may include: subsidy payments at higher rates (tiered reimbursement), grants and loans for program quality improvement, bonuses tied to achieving quality levels, and scholarships to providers. Tennessee's *Star-Quality Child Care Program* uses tiered reimbursement by awarding a higher reimbursement rate for programs, depending on their quality rating. For example, a three-star program would receive the base state rate, plus an additional 20% quality bonus payment per child.

## Quality Rating and Improvement Systems Nuts and Bolts – Tiers

### Which standards are addressed in the quality rating and improvement system?

Programs that participate in a QRIS are required to meet specific quality criteria to reach a certain tier. The starting place for QRIS standards and quality criteria should be the NAEYC Early Childhood Program Accreditation Standards and Performance Criteria.

Typically, QRIS include quality criteria for:

- Physical environment, including class size and ratios as well as health and safety (See NAEYC Accreditation Performance Criteria at <http://www.naeyc.org/academy/standards/standard9/> and NAEYC teacher-child ratios at [http://www.naeyc.org/academy/criteria/teacher\\_child\\_ratios.html](http://www.naeyc.org/academy/criteria/teacher_child_ratios.html)).
- Staff qualifications and professional development (See NAEYC Position Statement on a Conceptual Framework for Professional Development at <http://www.naeyc.org/about/positions/pdf/PSCONF98.PDF>).
- Interactions between teachers, children and families (See NAEYC Position Statement on Developmentally Appropriate Practice at <http://www.naeyc.org/about/positions/pdf/PSDAP98.PDF>).
- Developmentally and culturally appropriate curriculum and classroom practices (See NAEYC Position Statement on Developmentally Appropriate Practice at <http://www.naeyc.org/about/positions/pdf/PSDAP98.PDF>).
- Regular program evaluation and public reporting (See NAEYC Position Statement on Curriculum, Assessment and Program Evaluation at <http://www.naeyc.org/about/positions/pdf/CAPEexpand.pdf>).
- Continuous program quality improvement

### How many tiers should a QRIS have?

A QRIS should have more than two tiers, or levels, that build upon each other and move beyond the level of basic child care licensing standards (which are typically the first tier of a QRIS). The differences between steps need to be manageable so that movement toward a higher tier is achievable within a reasonable time frame. There should also be a differential award or bonus for achieving the next higher level as an incentive for programs.

NAEYC believes that QRIS tiers should be a continuum of quality, leading to the top tier that includes NAEYC Accreditation for center- and school-based programs.

### **What are some supports to help early childhood programs move from one level to the next higher level in a QRIS?**

QRIS do more than merely rate early childhood programs – they are true systems that link to a state’s overall early care and education system and include supports that help programs move from one level to the next highest level. These supports can include: free technical assistance and training, mentoring to help programs reach the next level of the quality rating, enhancement grants to programs, linking with a *T.E.A.C.H.* or *WAGE\$* program, and tuition assistance to providers.

There are two common ways that states have developed their tiers – a cumulative way in which the next higher tier builds upon the criteria in the tier below it, and a points scheme approach. Below are examples of states that use each approach:

#### **Multiple Tiers**

Oklahoma’s QRIS, *Reaching for the Stars*, has four levels for child care centers:

**One Star** – Program meets minimum child care licensing requirements

**One Star Plus** – Program meets child care licensing requirements and the following criteria:

- Program implements a salary scale with increments linked to level of education, credential, training and years of experience
- Director obtains additional training
- After 12 months, teachers obtain additional training
- Program is assessed using the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale
- Classrooms have weekly lesson plans and interest centers
- Teachers read to children daily
- Program offers seven methods of parent involvement

**Two Star** – 1. Program meets child care licensing requirements and is accredited through an approved national accrediting body (which includes NAEYC)

**OR**

2. Program meets all One Star Plus criteria and the criteria for Oklahoma master teacher responsibilities and qualifications

**Three Star** – Program meets all Two Star criteria and is accredited through an approved national accrediting organization (which includes NAEYC)

#### **Points Scheme**

Tennessee has a mandatory *Child Care Evaluation and Report Card Program* and a voluntary, *Star-Quality Child Care Program*. For the *Evaluation and Report Card Program*, all licensed child care centers are evaluated on seven areas: director qualifications, professional development, compliance history, parent/family involvement, ratio and group size, staff compensation, and program assessment (Harms Environment Rating Scale). Child care programs must have a certain rating to qualify for the voluntary *Star-Quality Child Care Program*.

Programs that qualify for the *Star-Quality Child Care Program* are automatically enrolled in the program and receive a detailed report card that includes component ratings (providers can earn up to 3 stars in each component) as well as an overall rating for the child care center (up to three stars). The overall rating is determined by totaling the component ratings and then dividing the total by the number of areas on which the program was evaluated. If a program is accredited by a Department of Human Services-approved agency (which includes NAEYC), it may be eligible to have one point added to its point total before it is averaged.

It should be noted that it can be difficult to give national accreditation a meaningful weight in a QRIS that uses a points scheme.

## **Quality Rating and Improvement Systems Nuts and Bolts – Program and Provider Supports**

The supports to programs and providers participating in a QRIS are not merely financial. QRIS offer technical assistance free of charge, as well as financial supports such as enhancement grants, scholarships and tuition assistance to providers, and bonuses or awards. Some QRIS are also linked to a state's tiered reimbursement system.

### **Technical Assistance**

In Palm Beach County, Florida's voluntary QRIS, programs receive coaching after completing an initial environmental rating scale, which serves as the baseline for the program. After a year of coaching, the program receives a star rating and the program is placed on a coaching maintenance program for the remainder of the time that the program participates in the QRIS. These supports are administered by the Children's Services Council of Palm Beach County.

### **Enhancement Grants**

Ohio's statewide QRIS, *Step Up to Quality*, gives accreditation grants for the purpose of assisting with national accreditation costs. Accreditation grants, along with critical repairs, classroom improvement, and early learning resource grants, must account for 25% of a center's annual award spending. Awards are contingent on funding, licensing compliance and the maintenance of Star rating requirements. The Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS) is funding the QRIS.

### **Program Supports (bonuses and awards) and Provider Supports (scholarships and tuition assistance)**

Kentucky's *STARS for KIDS NOW*, which is administered by the Kentucky Department of Education, includes various financial incentives and supports to both early care and education programs and providers. Once a program has received its star rating (between 1 and 4 stars), it is eligible for a one-time cash STAR Achievement Award. The amount of the award is based on the star rating and the number of children enrolled in the program.

Programs are eligible for quarterly quality incentive awards – which are based on the size of the program, the number of subsidy children served, and the STAR rating of the program. Additional supports include NAEYC Accreditation grants for child care centers, and mini grants to providers to support the attainment of a Child Development Associate (CDA).

Providers receive assistance with their training and education needs through the Early Childhood Development Scholarship Program. The supports that this program offers include: textbook cost reimbursement, milestone achievement awards, and access to

professional development counselors. To be eligible, providers must work with children in preschool settings for a minimum of 20 hours per week.

**Tiered Reimbursement**

The Maryland Child Care Tiered Reimbursement Program is a voluntary program which has four levels of tiered reimbursement. Each level recognizes that a licensed child care program has met all of certain criteria, including:

- Involvement in a program accreditation process
- Support for staff credentialing
- Offering continued training
- Providing an enhanced learning environment
- Providing certain levels of staff compensation
- Offering opportunities for parent involvement
- Program evaluation

Child care centers participating in the program receive a higher reimbursement rate that is based on the level they have achieved, as well as a child's subsidy level in the state's Purchase of Care program. Since programs must actively seek accreditation to participate, there is a fund to assist eligible programs in paying for the accreditation application fee, up to a maximum of \$1000. There are also funds available for accreditation support awards.

## **Quality Rating and Improvement Systems Nuts and Bolts – NAEYC Early Childhood Program Accreditation**

### **What is the role of NAEYC Accreditation in the quality rating and improvement system?**

The tiers in a QRIS should provide a continuum that sets clear benchmarks of quality that build upon each other, leading to the top tier that includes program accreditation by a national early childhood program accreditation system, including NAEYC Accreditation for center- and school-based programs.

### **What are the goals of the reinvented NAEYC Accreditation system?**

The primary goal of the reinvented NAEYC Accreditation system is to reliably and consistently recognize those programs that substantially meet its measure of quality—the ten NAEYC early childhood program standards. The reinvented system also includes new steps and requirements that clarify the NAEYC Accreditation process, help programs prepare for each step, and make sure that the crucial components of program quality are in place.

NAEYC views these steps and requirements as a bridge to help early childhood programs, and the early childhood field in general, make the transition to higher levels of program quality over the next few years. The steps and requirements were developed with extensive input from current practitioners as well as the Commission on NAEYC Early Childhood Program Standards and Accreditation Criteria, the Council for NAEYC Accreditation (a Board-appointed policy oversight body which reports to the Board annually on the accreditation system), and a group of representatives from large systems of programs for young children.

### **What is the role of NAEYC Accreditation in quality improvement?**

NAEYC Accreditation has become a powerful tool for improving the quality of early childhood programs – and the reinvention of the accreditation system strengthens this process even further. Accreditation lays the foundation for meeting NAEYC’s policy goals of:

- helping early childhood program personnel become involved in a process that will facilitate real, lasting improvements in the quality of early childhood programs serving young children; and
- evaluating the quality of and accrediting those programs that substantially comply with NAEYC performance criteria.

NAEYC early childhood program accreditation has set the standard for center- and school-based programs serving children birth through kindergarten, and sets the definition of quality across these settings.

Accreditation, like every other quality improvement strategy, operates as part of a larger system. For accreditation to be truly effective in achieving its goals, other aspects of the

system must also operate optimally. Both the reinvention and program standards commission grappled with the realities of the early childhood field—insufficient financing, weak infrastructure, and wide-ranging diversity in program delivery. In addition, early childhood programs, like all other educational institutions in the United States must face the challenges and the opportunities afforded by the growing diversity of language and cultures represented among our youngest citizens and the increasing numbers of children with disabilities and other special learning needs who deserve the same high quality of educational experiences as their peers.

Since accreditation encompasses all areas of program quality, it can be a powerful lever for effecting positive change. But the ability of the accreditation system to act as a catalyst for change is also affected by the quality of other aspects of the overall system of early childhood care and education in the United States. Throughout its 80-year history NAEYC has worked to strengthen all aspects of the early childhood delivery system, with a primary focus on defining quality in group programs. To ensure the success of its accreditation reinvention effort, NAEYC is committed to continue to work to address the broader systems issues that potentially limit the effectiveness of NAEYC Accreditation — and to enlist others to do the same.



**Facts about the NAEYC Accreditation system**

- NAEYC Accreditation sets a national standard for excellence for child care centers, preschools and kindergarten programs.
- The NAEYC Early Childhood Program Standards and Accreditation Performance Criteria reflect current research and practical experience regarding what it means to be a high-quality early childhood program.
- An early childhood program must meet each of the ten standards to be recognized as an NAEYC-accredited program.
- The standards and criteria were adopted by the NAEYC Governing Board after a lengthy developmental process that involved a panel of national experts in early childhood education, curriculum, early childhood special education, family involvement, leadership and administration, and child health, as well as multiple rounds of feedback from thousands of stakeholders.
- Continuous quality improvement is an essential part of NAEYC Accreditation. It is required of accredited programs, and NAEYC is committed to continuing to assess and refine the accreditation system itself. NAEYC is committed to regularly reviewing program performance and considering the current research base to inform potential changes to the standards and accreditation criteria.
- Emerging Practices Criteria are those for which the early childhood field and individual programs need time to develop the capacity to meet (due to, for example, the need for additional training, major facility renovations, or increased accessibility to certified consultants).
- Emerging Practices Criteria are considered part of the accreditation criteria, and programs will receive credit for meeting them although they will not be penalized for not meeting them during the first 2 years of the new system.

## Supplemental Materials

### Overview: What are Quality Rating and Improvement Systems?

*Quality Rating Systems: Definitions and Statewide Systems, NCCIC:*  
<http://nccic.acf.hhs.gov/pubs/qrs-defsystems.pdf>

### Planning a Quality Rating and Improvement System

*Quality Rating Systems: Implementation Guidelines, NCCIC:*  
<http://nccic.acf.hhs.gov/poptopics/qrs-implementation.pdf>

*Quality Rating Systems Planning Tool: Standards for Early Childhood Education Programs, NCCIC:*  
<http://nccic.acf.hhs.gov/poptopics/qrs-pt-ece.pdf>

*Stair Steps to Quality, A Guide for States and Communities Developing Quality Rating Systems for Early Care and Education:*  
[http://national.unitedway.org/files/pdf/sb6/StairStepstoQualityGuidebook\\_FINALforWEB.pdf](http://national.unitedway.org/files/pdf/sb6/StairStepstoQualityGuidebook_FINALforWEB.pdf)

### Quality Rating and Improvement Systems Nuts and Bolts - Financing

*Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG/CCDF):*  
<http://www.naeyc.org/policy/federal/>

*States with T.E.A.C.H. programs and Agency where T.E.A.C.H. is housed:*  
[http://www.childcareservices.org/ps/state\\_contacts.html](http://www.childcareservices.org/ps/state_contacts.html)

*Aligning Public Finance Systems: How can we most effectively maximize resources and build cohesive early care and education systems at the state level? 2004 Learning Community on Early Care & Education Finance Reform:*  
<http://www.earlychildhoodfinance.org/handouts/Aligning%20public%20ECE%20systems.doc>

*Financing Quality Rating Systems: Lessons Learned, Introduction and Conclusion:*  
[http://national.unitedway.org/files/pdf/sb6/Louise\\_Stoney\\_QRS\\_Financing\\_Paper.pdf](http://national.unitedway.org/files/pdf/sb6/Louise_Stoney_QRS_Financing_Paper.pdf)

### Quality Rating and Improvement Systems Nuts and Bolts – Tiers

*Reaching for the Stars Frequently Asked Questions, Oklahoma Division of Child Care:*

<http://www.okdhs.org/programsandservices/cc/stars/docs/starsfaqmain.htm>

*“Reaching for the Stars” Center Validation Study, Executive Summary:*

[http://www.ou.edu/ecco/Executive\\_Summary.pdf](http://www.ou.edu/ecco/Executive_Summary.pdf)

*Tennessee’s Star-Quality Child Care Program:*

<http://www.tnstarquality.org/refs/factsheet3.pdf>

*Star-Quality Child Care Program Report Card For Child Care Centers, Tennessee Department of Human Services:*

[http://www.state.tn.us/humanserv/adfam/star\\_centers.pdf](http://www.state.tn.us/humanserv/adfam/star_centers.pdf)

### **Quality Rating and Improvement Systems Nuts and Bolts – Program and Provider Supports**

*Maryland State Department of Education, Division of Early Childhood Development Office of Child Care, Credentialing Branch:*

<http://170.224.111.196/cca/creden/tiered.htm#overview>

*STARS: The Childcare Rating System, Kentucky Department of Education:*

<http://www.education.ky.gov/KDE/Instructional+Resources/Early+Childhood+Development/STARS++for+KIDS+NOW+%28Quality+Rating+System%29.htm>

*STARS for KIDS NOW Childcare Quality Rating System Standards for Type I Centers:*

<http://chfs.ky.gov/NR/rdonlyres/A879A0DB-35C8-4614-9118-F0DB8FD89371/0/QualityRatingSystemLicensedTypeI.doc>

*STARS FOR KIDS NOW: The Supports (Childcare Quality Rating System) for Type I Centers:*

<http://www.education.ky.gov/NR/rdonlyres/466FC0B6-E1F0-42A2-B352-4D15402771C6/0/ChildcareQualityRatingSystemChart.pdf>

*Licensed Type I STARS Awards and Incentives:*

<http://chfs.ky.gov/NR/rdonlyres/E3CC07C2-E00D-4081-9405-C300C887F94E/0/TypeISTARIncentives1.doc>

*Tiered Reimbursement Levels (Maryland):*

<http://170.224.111.196/cca/creden/pdfs/tlevel.pdf>

*Credentialing Branch, Maryland Division of Early Childhood Development, Office of Child Care:*

<http://170.224.111.196/cca/creden/tiered.htm>

### **Additional Resources**

*State Tiered Quality Strategies (TQS), 2004:*  
<http://nccic.acf.hhs.gov/poptopics/statetqs.pdf>

*Quality Rating Systems in Statute:*  
<http://nccic.acf.hhs.gov/pubs/qrs-statute.pdf>

*Financial Incentives in Quality Rating Systems:*  
<http://nccic.acf.hhs.gov/poptopics/qrs-fi.pdf>



National Association for the Education of Young Children  
1313 L Street NW Suite 500  
Washington DC 20005  
800-424-2460  
202-232-8777  
[www.naeyc.org](http://www.naeyc.org)